

# The Fairfile

WEEKLY EDITION.

WINNSBORO, S. C. WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1881.

ESTABLISHED IN 1848.

## THE BLACK ROBE.

BY WILLIAM COLLINS.

—AUTHOR OF—

"THE WOMAN IN WHITE," "THE MOON STONE," "AFTER DAWN," "NO NAME," "MAN AND WIFE," "THE LAW AND THE LADY," "THE NEW MAGDALEN," ETC., ETC.

"Indeed I don't, mamma. I hate him. Oh, hush, hush! Hate him as much as you like, but always be civil to him. Tell me, have you been in the conservatory with Romayne?"

"Yes."

"All going on well?"

"Yes."

"My sweet child! Dear, dear me, the wine has done you no good; you're as pale as ever. Is it that price? Oh, pooh, pooh! Leave Father Benwell to me."

CHAPTER IV.—IN THE SMALL HOURS.

When Stella left the conservatory, the attraction of the ball for Romayne was at an end. He went back to his rooms at the hotel.

Penrose was waiting to speak to him. Romayne noticed signs of suppressed agitation in his secretary's face.

"Has anything happened?" he inquired.

"Nothing of any importance," Penrose answered, in sad, subdued tones. "I only wanted to ask you for leave of absence."

"Certainly. Is it for a long time?" Penrose hesitated.

"You have a new life opening before you," he said. "If your experience of that life is as I hope and pray it may be—a happy one, you would need me no longer; we may not meet again."

His voice began to tremble; he could say no more.

"Not meet again?" Romayne repeated. "My dear Penrose, if you forget how man, happy days I owe to your companionship, my memory is to be trusted. Do you really know what my new life is to be? Shall I tell you what I have said to Stella to-night?"

Penrose lifted his hand with a gesture of entreaty.

"Not a word," he said, eagerly. "Do me one more kindness—leave me to be prepared (as I am prepared) for the change that is to come, without any confidence on your part to enlighten me further. Don't think me ungrateful. I have reasons for saying what I have just said—I cannot mention what they are—I can only tell you they are serious."

He spoke of his devotion to you. If you wish to reward me a hundredfold more than I deserve, hear in mind our conversations on religion, and keep the books I asked you to read, as gifts from a friend who loves you with his whole heart. No new duties that you can undertake are incompatible with the higher interests of your soul. Think of me sometimes. When I leave you I go back to a lonely life. My poor heart is full of your brotherly kindness at this moment when I may be saying good-bye for ever."

Romayne was more than surprised, he was shocked.

"Why must you leave me?" he asked.

"It is best for you and for her," said Penrose, "that I should withdraw myself from your new life."

He held out his hand. Romayne rose to let him go.

"Penrose," he said, "I can't match your resignation. Give me something to look forward to. I must and will see you again."

Penrose smiled sadly.

"You know that my career in life depends wholly on my superiors," he answered. "But if I am still in England, and if (which God forbid!) you have sorrows in the future that I can share and alleviate, only let me know it. There is nothing within the compass of my power which I will not do for your sake. God bless and prosper you! Good-bye!"

In spite of his fortitude the tears rose in his eyes. He hurried out of the room.

Romayne sat down at his writing-table and hid his face in his hands. He had entered the room with the bright image of Stella in his mind. The image had faded from him now—the grief that was in him had not even the beloved woman could share.

He trimmed his lamp and bent his mind on his work. While he was still reading, the ball at Lord Loring's house came to its end. Stella and Lady Loring were alone together, talking of him, before they retired to their rooms.

"Forgive me for owing it, plainly," said Lady Loring, "I think you're a little too ready to reward me with any disagreeable cause. Thousands of people go to Clorville, and Despard house is one of the show-places in the neighborhood. Is there a little prejudice in this new id. of yours?"

Stella made no reply; she seemed to be in her own thoughts.

Lady Loring went on:

"I am open to conviction, my dear. If you will only tell me what interest Father Benwell can have in knowing about you and Winterfield—"

Stella suddenly looked up.

"Let us speak of another person," she said. "I own I don't like Father Benwell. As you know, Romayne has concealed nothing from me. Ought I not to tell him about Winterfield?"

Lady Loring started.

"You astonish me," she said, "What right has Romayne to know it?"

"What right has he to keep it a secret from him?"

"My dear Stella, if you had been in any way to blame in that miserable matter I should be the last person in the world to advise you to keep it a secret. But you are innocent of all blame. No man—not even the man who is soon to be your husband—has a right to know what you have so unjustly suffered. Think of the humiliation of even speaking of it to Romayne?"

"I don't think of it," cried Stella, passionately. "But if it is my duty—"

"It is your duty to consider the consequences," Lady Loring interposed. "You don't know how such things sometimes rankle in a man's mind. He may be perfectly willing to do you justice, and yet there may be moments when he would doubt if you had told him the whole truth. I speak with the experience of a married woman. Don't place yourself in that position toward your husband if you wish for a happy married life."

Stella was not quite convinced yet. "Suppose Romayne finds it out?" she said.

"He can't possibly find it out. I detest Winterfield, but let us do him justice. He is no fool. He has his position in the world to keep up—and that is enough of itself to close his lips. And as for others, there are only three people in England now who could betray you. I suppose you could trust your mother, and Lord Loring and me?"

It was needless to answer such a question as that. Before Stella could speak again Lord Loring's voice was audible outside the door. "What, talking still?" he exclaimed. "Not in bed yet?"

"Come in?" cried his wife. "Let us hear what my husband thinks," she said to Stella.

Lord Loring listened with the closest attention while the subject under discussion was communicated to him. When the time came he gave his opinion—he sided unhesitatingly with his wife.

"If the fault was yours, even in the slightest degree," he said to Stella, "Romayne would have a right to be taken into your confidence. But, my dear child, we, who know the truth, know you to be a pure and innocent woman. You go to Romayne in every way worthy of him, and you know that he loves you. If you did tell him that miserable story he could only pity you. Do you want to be pitied?"

Those last unanswerable words brought the debate to an end. From that moment the subject was dropped.

There was still one other person among the guests at the ball who was waking in the small hours of the morning. Father Benwell, wrapped comfortably in his dressing gown, was too hard at work on his correspondence to think of his bed.

With an exception, all the letters that he had written thus far were closed, directed and stamped for the post. The letter that he kept open he was now engaged in reconsidering and correcting. It was addressed, as usual, to the secretary of the Order, at Rome; and when it had undergone the final revision, it contained these lines:

"My last letter informed you of Romayne's return to London and to Miss Eyre. Let me entreat our reverend brethren to preserve perfect tranquility of mind, in spite of this circumstance. The owner of Vange Abbey is not married yet. If patience and perseverance on my part win their fair reward, Miss Eyre could still never be his wife."

"But let me not conceal the truth. In the uncertain future that lies before us, I have no one to depend on but myself. Penrose is no longer to be trusted, and the exertions of the agent to whom I have committed my inquiries are exertions that have failed."

"I will dispose of the case of Penrose first."

"The zeal with which this young man has undertaken the work of conversion entrusted to him, has, I regret to say, been fired by a dog-like affection for Romayne. Without waiting for my permission, Penrose has revealed himself in his true character as a priest. And more than this, he has not only refused to observe the proceedings of Romayne and Miss Eyre—but he has deliberately closed his ears to the confidence which Romayne wished to repose in him, on the ground that I might have ordered him to repeat that confidence to me."

"To what use can we put this man's tale? For the present he has left London to assist in the spiritual care of a country district. It will be a question for the future whether we may not turn his enthusiasm to good account, in a mission to foreign parts. But, as it is always possible that his influence may be of use to us, I venture to suggest keeping him within our reach until Romayne's conversion has actually taken place."

"I may now proceed to the failure of my agent, and to the course of action that I have adopted in consequence."

"The investigations appear to have definitely broken down at the seaside village of Clorville, in the neighborhood of Mr. Winterfield's country-seat. Knowing that I could depend upon the information which associated this gentleman with Miss Eyre, out of compromising circumstances of some sort, I decided on seeing Mr. Winterfield and judging for myself."

"The agent's report informed me that the person who had finally baffled his inquiries was an aged Catholic priest, long resident at Clorville. His name was Newbitt, and he is much respected among the Catholic gentry in that part of Devonshire. After due consideration, I obtained a letter of introduction to my reverend colleague, and traveled to Clorville, telling my friends here that I was taking a little holiday in the interests of my health."

"I found Father Newbitt a venerable and reticent son of the church, with one weak point, however, to work on, which was entirely beyond the reach of the otherwise astute person charged with my inquiries. My reverend friend is a scholar, and is inordinately proud of his learning. I am a scholar, too. In that capacity I first found my way to his sympathies, and then gently encouraged his pride. The result will appear in certain discoveries which I number as follows:

"1. The events which connect Mr. Winterfield with Miss Eyre, out of which two years' time, and had their beginning at Despard house. The general impression in the neighborhood was that Mr.

Winterfield and Miss Eyre were engaged to be married.

"3. Not long afterward, Miss Eyre, and her mother surprised the neighborhood by suddenly leaving Despard house. Their destination was supposed to be London."

"4. Mr. Winterfield himself left next his country-seat for the Continent. His exact destination was not mentioned to any one. The steward, soon afterward, dismissed all the servants, and the house was left empty for more than a year."

"5. At the end of that time Mr. Winterfield returned alone to Despard house, and told nobody how or where he had passed the long interval of his absence."

"6. Mr. Winterfield remains, to the present day, an unmarried man."

"Having arrived at these preliminary discoveries, it was time to try what I could make of Mr. Winterfield next."

"Among the other good things which this gentleman has inherited, is a magnificent library, collected by his father. That learned man should take an interest in the books was a perfectly natural proceeding. My introduction to the master of the house followed my introduction to the library almost as a matter of course."

"I am about to surprise you, as I was myself surprised. In all my long experience Mr. Winterfield is, I think, the most fascinating person I ever met with. Gentle, unassuming manner, a prepossessing personal appearance, a sweet temper, a quiet humor, delightfully accompanied by natural refinement—such are the characteristic qualities of the man from whom I myself saw Miss Eyre (accidentally meeting him in public) recoil with dismay and disgust."

"It is absolutely impossible to look at him, and to believe him to be capable of a cruel or dishonorable action. I never was so puzzled in my life."

"You may be inclined to think that I am misled by a false impression, derived from the gratifying welcome that I received as a friend of Father Newbitt. I will not appeal to my knowledge of human nature—I will refer to the unanswerable evidence of Mr. Winterfield's poorer neighbors. Whenever I went, in the village or out of it, if I mentioned his name I produced a universal outburst of admiration and gratitude. 'There never was such a friend to poor people, and there never can be such another of the end of the world.' Such was a fisherman's description of him, and the cry of all the men and women near us answered: 'That's the truth!'"

"And yet, there is something wrong, for the plain reason that there is a secret to keep in the past lives of Mr. Winterfield and Miss Eyre."

"Under these perplexing circumstances, what use have I made of my opportunities? I am going to surprise you again—I have mentioned Romayne's name to Mr. Winterfield, and I have ascertained that they are, so far, perfect strangers to one another—and that is all."

"The little incident of mentioning Romayne arose out of my examination of the library. I discovered certain old volumes, which may one day be of use to him, if he continues his contemplated work on the Origin of Religion. Hearing me express my interest in them, Mr. Winterfield replied to this effect, Mr. Winterfield replied to the reader kindly:

"I can't compare myself to my excellent father," he said; "but I have at least inherited his respect for the writers of books. My library is a treasure which I hold in trust for the interests of literature. Pray say so from me to your friend, Mr. Romayne."

"And what does this amount to? You will ask. My reverend friend, it offers me an opportunity in the future of bringing Romayne and Winterfield together. Do you see the complications which may ensue? If I can put out other difficulties in Miss Eyre's way, I think there is fruitful promise of a scandal of some kind arising out of the introduction to each other of those two men. You will agree with me that a scandal may prove a valuable obstacle in the way of marriage."

"Mr. Winterfield has kindly invited me to call on him when he is next in London. I may then have opportunities of putting questions which I would not venture to ask on a short acquaintance."

"In the meantime, I have obtained another introduction since my return to town. I have been presented to Miss Eyre's mother; and I am invited to drink tea with her on Wednesday. My next letter may tell you what Penrose ought to have discovered—whether Romayne has been already entrapped into a marriage engagement or not."

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"Only light was a reading-lamp, with the shade so lowered that the corners of the study were left in obscurity. In one of these corners Romayne was dimly visible sitting with his head sunk on his breast. He never moved when Stella opened the door. At first she thought he might be asleep."

"Do I disturb you, Lewis?" she asked softly.

"No, my dear."

There was a change in the tone of his voice which his wife's quick ear detected.

"I am afraid you are not well," she said anxiously.

"I am a little tired after our long ride to-day. Do you want to go back to the Belvidere?"

"Not without you. Shall I leave you to rest here?"

He seemed not to hear the question. He sat, with his head hanging down, the shadowy countenance of an old man. In her anxiety Stella approached him, and put her hand caressingly on his head. It was burning hot.

"Oh!" she cried, "you are ill and you are trying to hide it from me."

"For a moment he was still silent, taking off his handkerchief and passing it rapidly over his face."

"Nothing is the matter with me," he said, with an uneasy laugh. He put his arm round her waist, and made her sit on his knee. "What have you got in your hand?" he asked—"A letter?"

"Yes. Addressed to you, and not opened yet."

"He took it out of her hand and threw it carelessly on a sofa near him."

"Never mind that now! Let us talk." He passed his hand before his eyes, and then said, "I think you must be feeling tired of Vange?"

"Oh, no! I can be happy anywhere with you—and especially at Vange. You don't know how this noble old house interests me, and how I admire the glorious country all around it."

He was not convinced.

"Vange's very dull," he said, obstinately. "And your friends will be wanting to see you. Have you heard from your mother, lately?"

"No. I am surprised she has not written."

"She has not forgotten us for getting married so quietly," he went on. "We had better go back to London and make our peace with her. Don't you want to see the house my aunt left me at Highgate?"

Stella sighed. The society of the man she loved was not enough for her. Was he getting tired of his wife already?

"I will go with you wherever you like," she said these words in tones of sad submission, and gently got up from his knee.

He rose also, and took from the sofa the letter which he had thrown on it.

"Let us see what our friends say," he resumed. "The address is in Loring's handwriting."

As he approached the table on which the lamp was burning, she noticed that he moved with a languor that was new in his experience of him. He sat down and opened the letter. She watched him with an anxiety which had now become intensified to suspicion. The shade of the lamp still prevented her from seeing his face plainly.

"Just what I told you," he said; "the Loring's want to know when they are to see us in London, and your mother says she feels like that character in Shakespeare who was cut by his own daughters." Read it."

He handed her the letter. In taking it, she contrived to touch the lamp-shade, and it fell, and it fell it was the full glow of the light fell on him. He started back, but not before she had seen the ghastly pallor on his face. She did not only hear it from Lady Loring, she knew it from his own unreserved confession to her what that startling change really meant. In an instant she was on her knees at his feet.

"Oh, my darling!" she cried, "it was cruel to keep that secret from your wife. You have heard it again!"

She was too irresistibly beautiful at that moment to be reproved. Her gently raised her from the floor, and moved the truth.

"Yes," he said; "I heard it after you left me on the Belvidere, just as I heard it on another moonlight night, when Major Hynd was here with me. Our return to this house is perhaps the cause. I don't complain; I have had a long escape."

She threw her arms around his neck.

"We will leave Vange to-morrow," she said.

It was firmly spoken. But her heart sank, as the words passed her lips. Vange Abbey had been the scene of the most unalloyed happiness in her life. What destiny was waiting for her when she returned to London?

(To be continued.)

A Slaughter of Swallows.

A Milanese sporting party, *La Caccia*, makes known an instance of purposeless slaughter scarcely equalled before in modern times.

Under the heading "A Most Important Shooting Match," the following letter from an individual signing himself "Circusius Gallus" is given: I send you intelligence of a most important shooting match accomplished by Signor Fagella, and which, as a feat of endurance and skill, will make the record of the sporting papers. On the 24th September Signor Fagella, with a retinue of seventeen persons, men and boys, went to a place called Buttrifero, some two kilometers distant from Bologna, about 6:30 A. M., with six central-fire breech-loading rifles, and there proceeded to the match, being rainy. The swallows passed in large numbers the whole day, and the shooting lasted till 6:15 P. M., with the interval of an hour for refreshment. The result was as follows: The following table shows the number of swallows killed by each shooter, and the number of birds which were lost.

On one lovely moonlight night, early in July, Mrs. Romayne left her husband on the Belvidere, described in Major Hynd's narrative, to give the housekeeper certain instructions relating to the affairs of the household. Half an hour later, as she was about to ascend again to the top of the house, one of the servants informed her that "the master had just left the Belvidere, and had gone into his study."

Crossing the inner hall, on her way to the study, Stella noticed an unopened letter, addressed to Romayne, lying on a table in a corner. He had probably laid it aside and forgotten it. She entered the room with his letter in her hand.

Only light was a reading-lamp, with the shade so lowered that the corners of the study were left in obscurity. In one of these corners Romayne was dimly visible sitting with his head sunk on his breast. He never moved when Stella opened the door. At first she thought he might be asleep.

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## The Diptheria Plant.

Some light was thrown on the origin of the diptheria plant, a lecture before the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, by Prof. Horatio C. Wood, who gave the result of his researches on the subject.

Prof. Wood, in his lecture, in- volving the important dis- ease, the diptheria plant, is a fatal and insidious disease, prop- agated by a microscopic plant or fungi, existing in all human beings, especially in the mouth and throat, and having the power of reproduction until given increased vitality by those disordered conditions of the mucous membrane of the throat, which are caused by cold.

The investigations were made at the instance of the National Board of Health, and extended, not only to the phenomena attending the ordinary epidemic of diptheria existing in Philadelphia, but to the more violent form occurring from time to time in different places. Dr. Forman visited an infected house on May 15th, where one of the children of the epidemic, and brought back with him specimens of the diptheria virus, several of which were found to be identical with those formed in the throats of affected persons, and portions of these were sent to the Prof.

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